

First Special Service Force Receives Congressional Gold Medal

February 3, 2015

WASHINGTON — Members of the First Special Service Force (the Force), an elite American–Canadian joint combat group, were collectively awarded the Congressional Gold Medal today during a ceremony in Emancipation Hall in the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center.

Designed and struck by the United States Mint, the Medal recognizes the Force for its superior service during World War II. Activated in July 1942, the Force’s mission was to target military and industrial installations that supported the German war effort. It was the only joint American–Canadian unit formed during World War II.

Deployed to Italy in October 1943, the highly trained group engaged in combat in high altitudes, rugged terrain, and severe weather. The Force was instrumental in repelling the advance of Nazi Germany and liberating numerous communities in France and Italy. During 251 days of combat, the group suffered 2,314 casualties, or 134 percent of its authorized strength, captured thousands of prisoners, earned five United States campaign stars and eight Canadian battle honors, and never failed a mission.

The Medal’s obverse (heads side) highlights the Force’s mountaineering, silent landings, and waterway training abilities. The design incorporates the group’s spearhead patch, representing the unique partnership between the United States and Canada. The inscription is “FIRST SPECIAL SERVICE FORCE.” The obverse was designed by United States Mint Artistic Infusion Program (AIP) artist Joel Iskowitz and sculpted by United States Mint Sculptor–Engraver Joseph Menna.

The reverse (tails side) design features the Force’s insignia, with crossed arrows at the bottom of the design, and a banner in the eagle’s beak that reads “USA” and “CANADA.” The Medal is inscribed with its five campaigns, “ACT OF CONGRESS.” and “2013.” The reverse was designed by AIP artist Richard Masters and sculpted by United States Mint Sculptor–Engraver Don Everhart.

A digital image of the medal is available at <http://www.usmint.gov/pressroom/?action=Photo>.

Public Law 113–16, which requires the United States Mint to strike the Congressional Gold Medal for the Force, also authorizes the bureau to strike and sell bronze reproductions of the Medal. The three–inch Medal (*product code 438*) will be priced at \$39.95 and the 1.5–inch Medal (*product code 439*) will be priced at \$6.95. Orders will be accepted starting on Feb. 4 at noon Eastern Standard Time via the bureau’s online catalog at <http://catalog.usmint.gov/> and at 1–800–USA–MINT (872–6468). Hearing– and speech–impaired customers with TTY equipment may call 1–888–321–MINT (6468).

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